

F 189

W3M8



F 189  
.W3 M8  
Copy 1

# HISTORIC FORT WASHINGTON.

READ BEFORE THE COLUMBIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.



FORT WASHINGTON.

JAMES DUDLEY MORGAN,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

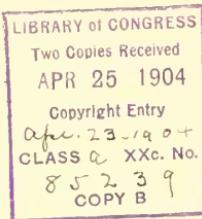
Reprinted from the Records of the Columbia Historical Society.

COPYRIGHTED.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

APRIL, 1904.

F 89  
12 M



## HISTORIC FORT WASHINGTON ON THE POTOMAC.

BY JAMES DUDLEY MORGAN, M.D.

(Read before the Society, January 12, 1903.)

The strategic advantage of that promontory on the Potomac, which is now called Fort Washington, seems to have been known to the Indians, long before the coming of the white man into this region. That these aborigines appreciated the natural advantages for defense and offense offered by this bluff at the junction of the Potomac River and Piseataway Creek, and that their judgment and choice of the situation were both sound and unassailable is attested by the continued occupancy of this mound for hostile defense by the first colonial settlers under Governor Calvert; by its choice as a point for a fortification by Generals Washington and Knox; by its improvement and enlargement under Presidents Madison and Monroe, and by its reaching at our present day the distinction of flying the garrison flag.

### FIRST PERIOD.

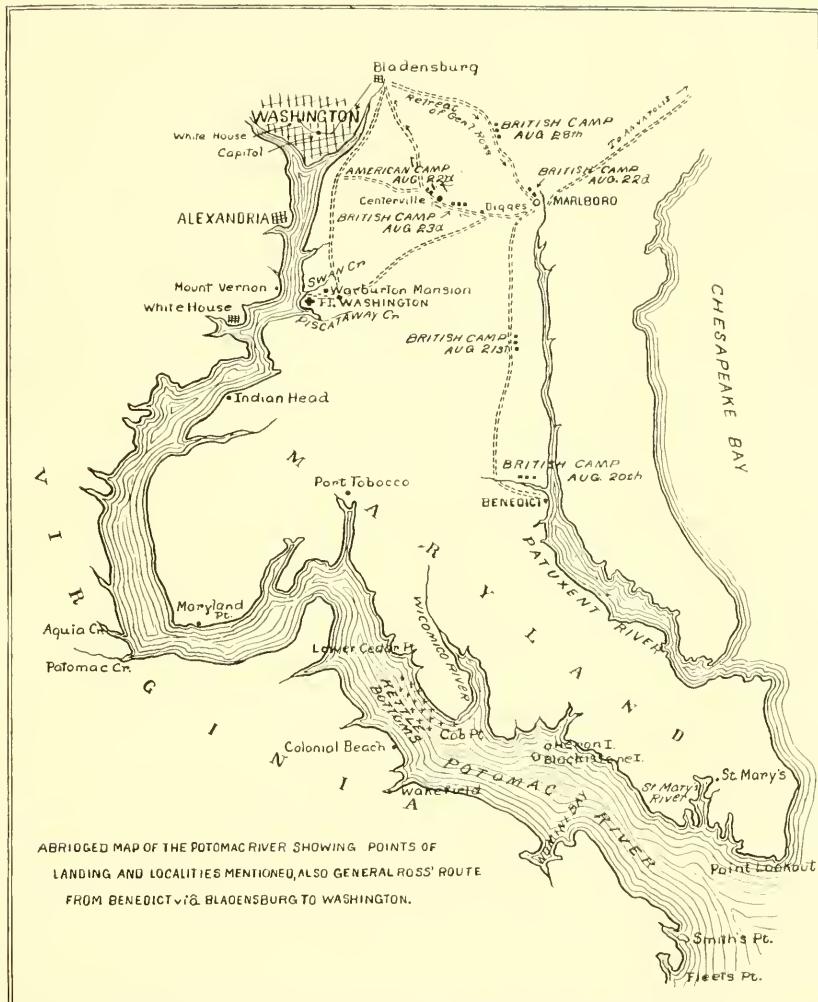
The colonists from England, in the *Ark* and the *Dove*, penetrated as far up the Potomac River as what is now called Heron and Blackistone Islands, before disembarking. Leaving most of his party here, Governor Leonard Calvert, with a few chosen men of the party, set out in two pinnaces to further explore the river. They made several landings, one about four leagues up at a point near the present Colonial Beach, but here the natives on their approach became alarmed and fled into the interior. Their next stop was after sailing about nine leagues, which brought them to what

is now called Marlborough Point.\* Here the Indian chief, Archihu, met them in a friendly manner and said, "You are welcome; we will use one table; my people shall hunt for my brother." Continuing their voyage of discovery, they came to what was then and is yet called Piscataway Creek, and here they found the surrounding heights covered with Indians, to the number of about five hundred, in hostile array. After long and patient gesticulations and demonstrations, the colonists convinced the natives that their mission was peaceable, and a conference with their chief then took place. It was here that the English found Henry Fleet, who had been captured and held as a prisoner, and through his acting as interpreter much good feeling was shown.

Shortly after the arrival of Governor Calvert and his party at Piscataway Creek the Indian chief fell ill, and forty conjurers or medicine men in vain tried every remedy within their power; when one of Governor Calvert's party, a Father White, by permission of the chief administered some medicine to him and caused him to be freely bled;—the treatment was successful, the invalid began to improve, and was soon restored to perfect health.† The chieftain, though, would not bid Calvert and his men either go or stay, but told him "he might use his own discretion." Governor Calvert, not overpleased with the dubiousness of his welcome, thought prudence was the better policy, and deeming it unwise to settle so far up (150 miles) the Potomac, after having by various presents persuaded the chief of the Piscataways to allow Henry

\* Marlborough Point was on Potomac Creek; and here as early as 1828, the steamer from Washington made connections with the stage for southern and southwestern travel: "Time between Washington and Richmond is 26 hours, being 24 hours sooner than by any other route."

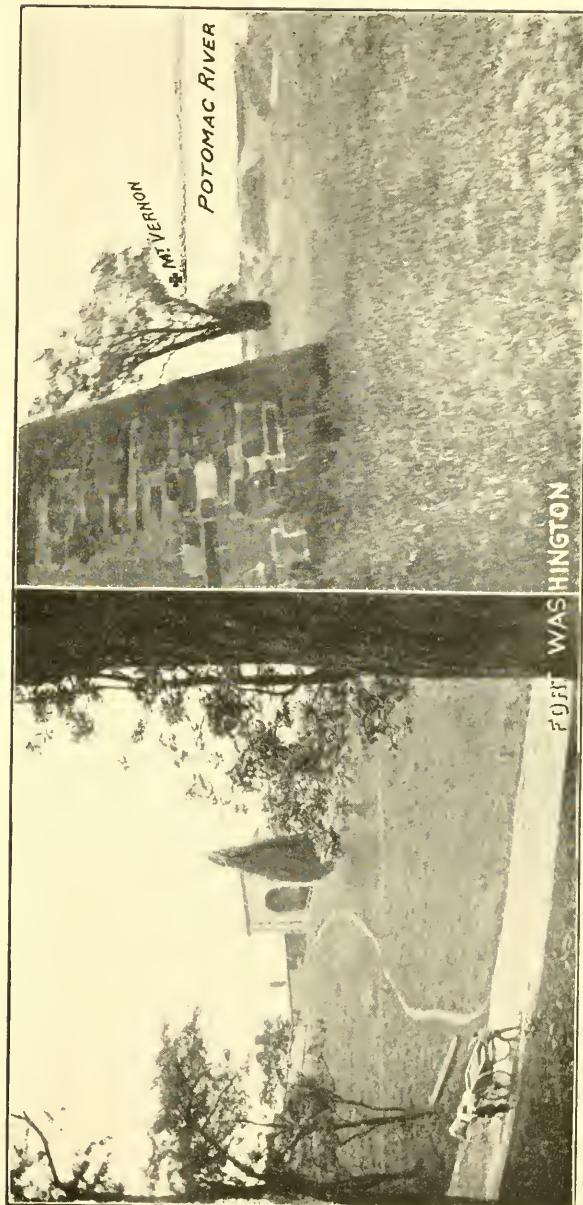
† McSherry's "History of Maryland."



FROM OLD MAPS OF THE POTOMAC RIVER AND ITS ENVIRONMENTS.

BY DR. JAMES D. MORGAN.





FORT WASHINGTON.

Showing sally-port, draw-bridge, ramparts, and outer walls; also Potomac River and Mt. Vernon opposite. From photograph by Dr. James D. Morgan.



Fleet to accompany them, returned for his copatriots, who were awaiting him at Blackistone's Island, and entering the river now called the St. Mary's, and about ten miles from its junction with the Potomac, purchased of the Indians part of their village, where he commenced his settlement to which was given the name (March 27, 1634) of St. Mary's. This purchase of land and treaty with the Indians was much facilitated by a happy occurrence, at least for the colonists, which took place at this time. The Susquehannock Indians, who lived about the head of the bay, were in the practice of making incursions on their neighbors, the Yoamacoës, in the vicinity of St. Mary's city, partly for dominion and partly for booty, and of the booty women were mostly desired. The Yoamacoës were at this very time fearing a visitation of the Susquehannocks, and had already gotten to a point of safety many of their wives and sweethearts, so that striking a bargain for the purchase of the land was rendered very easy for the colonists.

It was but eleven years after (1645) the establishment of St. Mary's city (1634) that among the many acts and regulations for the defense of the province, we read of one for the establishment of a garrison at the mouth of the Piscataway Creek, and authorizing "Thomas Watson of St. George's Hundred to assemble all the freemen of that hundred for the purpose of assessing upon that hundred only the charge of a soldier, who had been sent by that hundred to serve in the garrison at Piscataway."\*\* In Ridpath's "History of the United States," page 219, we read as follows: "On the present site of Fort Washington, which is nearly opposite Mount Vernon, the Indian village of Piscataway stood. Here Gov. Leonard Calvert

\* Bozman's "History of Maryland," vol. 2, p. 291.

moored his pinnace and held a conference with the chief of the Piscataways." "This Indian village," says Willson, in his history, "was fifteen miles south from Washington on the east side of the Potomac at the mouth of the Piscataway Creek, opposite Mount Vernon and near the site of the present Fort Washington." An Indian settlement appears on John Smith's map of Virginia, opposite Mount Vernon, at the mouth of the Piscataway Creek.

#### SECOND PERIOD.

It is always a subject for congratulation that any enterprise in connection with the interests of our young republic was either instigated by or had the endorsement of General Washington. He evidently weighed well and considered and overlooked the whole field of facts before promoting or sanctioning an innovation. That he might gain a more thorough knowledge of the topography of the country surrounding our Federal City, and the course and tributaries of the Potomac he, in 1785, accompanied by several friends, among whom was Governor Johnson of Maryland, made a tour of investigation, in a canoe, of the upper Potomac, long before the removal of the seat of government to Washington. So it was before recommending to General Knox that promontory on the Potomac for a fort (1794)\* that he had overlooked, examined and sojourned in the immediate neighborhood and consequently was thoroughly familiar with

\* "12th of May, 1794, Henry Knox, who was Secretary of War under President Washington received a letter which reads thus: The President of the United States who is well acquainted with the river Potomac conceived that a certain bluff of land on the Maryland side, near Mr. Digges', a point formed by an eastern branch of the Potomac would be a proper situation for the fortification about to be erected." The amount to be expended for the fort was only to be \$3,000.

the locality and knew of its many advantages. It was often his custom in going either to Bladensburg, Upper Marlborough or to Annapolis to ferry the Potomac from Mount Vernon to Warburton, and thus continue his journey. He has often, when tired or belated, or for social intercourse, stopped and spent some time with George or Thomas Digges at Warburton—what is now Fort Washington. The writer has heard Dr. Joseph M. Toner, in speaking of the beautiful and unobstructed view from Mount Vernon to Warburton\* (now Fort Washington), narrate the story taken from Washington Irving's "Life of General Washington," of how General Washington stood on that knoll, a little to the front of his home, and through that forest vista signaled by flag to Warburton. Then their little boats with liveried men would pull out from the shores of the Potomac, to bear the invited one to Mount Vernon or Warburton, or to strike a trade perchance of tobacco, corn, or wheat, for cattle or sheep, or what not.

## EXHIBIT 1.

WARBURTON April 7, 1775.

*Dear Sir*

My Father & Mr. Hawkins will take four hundred Bushel of your Salt, & I will copy a few Advertisements to be put up in this Neighborhood—your Vessel may come along side

\* "The troops stationed near Fort Washington (Warburton)." *National Intelligencer*, July 20, 1813.

"At Fort Washington, now Fort Warburton." "In August, 1814, the troops stationed at Fort Warburton, the only defense of Alexandria, blew up the magazine, and abandoned the fort." Pages 15 and 128, "Description of the Territory of Columbia," Warden, Paris, 1816.

"Captain Gordon ordered to bombard fort Warburton." "Historical Register of the United States," p. 35, Phila., 1816.

"In the same despondent hour, when General Winder declared that Fort Warburton was not tenable. \* \* \*" "Historical Sketch of Second War between United States and Great Britain," by Chas. J. Ingersoll, p. 181, Phila., Lea and Blanchard, 1849.

of our Warf, which I apprehend wou'd be more Convenient for the people that may want to purchase.

The family Join in Complts. to all at Mt. Vernon, with  
Dear Sir

Your Most Ob Sert.

GEO DIGGES

(Addressed to)

For

COL. GEORGE WASHINGTON

at

Mount Vernon.

The *Manor of Warburton* was patented in October 20, 1641. Bounded by Piscataway Creek, Potomac River and part of Swan Creek by natural boundarys, etc., makes it 1,200 acres more or less. Short entry of the certificate is dated June 20, 1637.

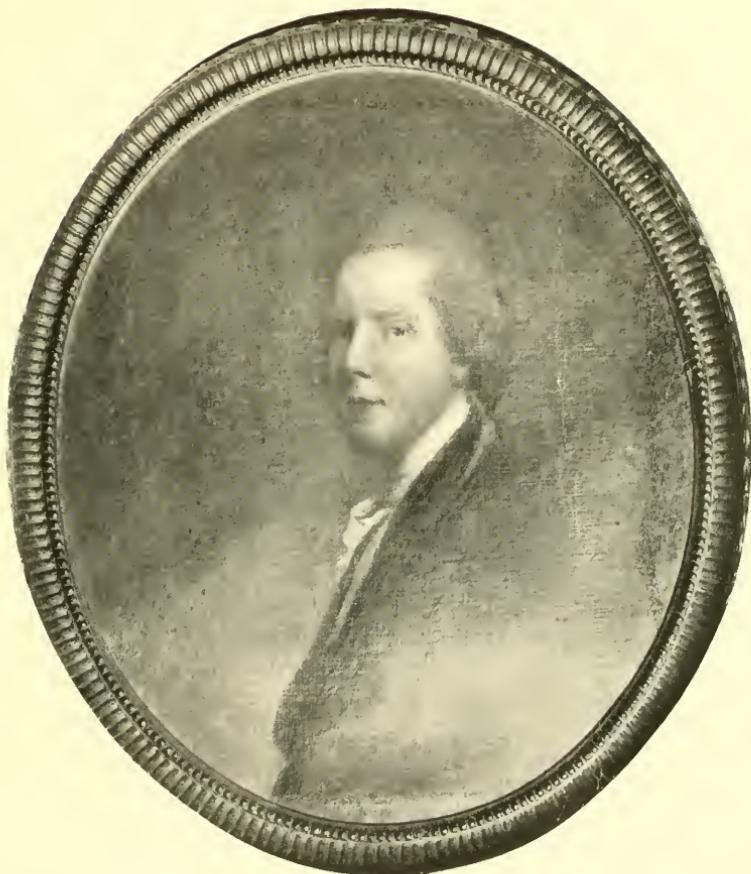
#### EXHIBIT 2.

(To Thomas Digges about exchange of wheat, from Gen. Washington.)

Genl. Washington presents his compliments to Mr. Digges, and will, with pleasure, exchange 20 bushels of the *early White Wheat* with him when he gets it out of the straw;—which is not the case at present—nor can be until the latter end of next week or beginning of the week following: which would be full early for sowing *that* kind of Wheat—Indeed any time in September is in good season.—The middle, better than sooner in that month.—

A good journey to Mr. Digges  
Mount Vernon 31. Septr. 1799.

There was evidently much social visiting between the Washingtons and the families at Warburton and other neighboring country seats. In addition to the hospitality extended during the hunting season, Mr. Irving speaks of “water parties upon the Potomac in



THOMAS DIGGES, OF "WARBURTON MANOR."

From portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in possession of Mrs. Ella Morgan Speer.



those palmy days, when Mr. Digges would receive his guests in a barge rowed by six negroes arrayed in the uniform, whose distinguishing features were checked shirts and black velvet caps. As Mr. Irving's 'palmy days' were before the Revolution, the Mr. Digges referred to was evidently Mr. George A. Digges, who lived at Warburton, until his death in 1792. At this time, Warburton passed into the hands of a bachelor brother, Thomas. As was customary with the sons of the Maryland and the Virginia planters, Thomas Digges had spent his youth in London, where he was known in his circle of friends as the handsome American. Although young Digges lived the life of a youth of fashion among the 'Macaroni' of his day, when his services were needed by his country, he proved himself to be a man of resolute character, and ardently patriotic. The Continental Congress required a secret and confidential agent near the Court of St. James, and Thomas Digges was, through the influence of Washington, selected for this hazardous and important mission."\*

## EXHIBIT 3.

(Addressed to)

His Excellency  
GENERAL WASHINGTON  
at  
Mount Vernon  
Virginia.

(Endorsed by Washington)

From  
THOMAS DIGGES Esq.  
10th April 1798.

Mr. Digges presents His respectful compliments and best wishes to General Washington and sends this in a small box

\* "Social Life in the Early Republic," Wharton.

of seeds, which accompanies a few Potatoes of a remarkably approved kind & productive Growth, which Mr. Rhd. Edmonds Seedsman No. 96 Grace Church Street London hand-somely offered to and pressd Mr. D to present in His name to General Washington.

Mr. Chs. Pye, who has also purchased some seeds of Mr. Edmonds with me, has promised to take care of them, He being one of the passengers by the Mount Vernon Capt. Johnson bound to Alexandria.

The Potatoes and the Garden Seeds are obliged to be put in separate parcels for fear of the yielding damp of the former hurtling [*sic*] the seeds.

Mr. Rhd. Edmond's  
No. 96 Grace Church Street  
London 10th Apl. 1798.

Mr. Digges has taken the liberty  
to send in the Box of Seeds a few  
late News Papers.

#### EXHIBIT 4.\*

ANNAPOLIS Jany. 5, 1787.

*Dear Sir*

Mr. Gillis's Polk (who is now here) & lives at Salisbury in Somerset County will Immediately upon his return home have the plank sawed agreeable to your direection & also will forward it by the first Opportunity—Our Senate have rejected the Money Bill & this day we expect a Message from them given their reasons. We have done little or no Public Business nor doe I believe we shall as there seems to be a Party for breaking up at all events next Week with Compts. to Mrs. Washington & family am

*Dear Sir*

with great Respect

Yr. Most Obt. Sert.

GEO. DIGGES

N. B.

I did not get yr. letter till after

\* Original of Exhibits 1, 3 and 4 in Department of State, Washington,  
D. C.

Gen<sup>r</sup>. Washington presents his  
compliments to Mr<sup>r</sup> Digges, and will,  
with pleasure, exchange 20 bushels  
of the early white wheat with him  
when he gets it out of the straw, - which  
is not the case at present nor can be un-  
til the latter end of next week or be-  
ginning of the week following, which  
will be full early for sowing that kind of  
Wheat - Indeed any time in September  
is a good season. - The middle, better  
than sooner in that month. -

A good journey to Mr<sup>r</sup> Digges.  
At  
Mount Vernon 31. Sept<sup>r</sup>. 1799

LETTER FROM GENERAL WASHINGTON TO THOMAS DIGGES, ESQ.

About "exchange of wheat." Dated September "31st," 1799. Taken from the original in possession of Dr. James D. Morgan.



the Post left Town & Mr. Powell  
the bearer of this has promised to  
forward it—  
(To GENL. WASHINGTON.)

### THIRD PERIOD.

From the period of about 1795, when negotiations were entered into with Mr. George Digges for the purchase of part of Warburton at the mouth of the Piscataway Creek, on the Potomac River, for a fort, and the further expense to the government of small sums of money for intrenchments at that point, there was very little done, until President Madison, aroused by the imminent danger of war with Great Britain, directed that Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant proceed to Fort Warburton and report to the Secretary of War the condition of that defense. Major L'Enfant, in a written report (May 28, 1813), told of the dilapidated condition of the fort and the armament, and urged a suitable appropriation for putting the fort in proper condition for the defense of the Potomac and the Federal City. He spoke of the necessity of an additional number of heavy guns at Fort Warburton and an additional fort in the neighborhood, and concludes thus: "That the whole original design was bad, and it is therefore impossible to make a perfect work of it by any alterations." To prove that L'Enfant believed firmly in adequate sea and coast defenses, and that the best way to prevent war was to be prepared, the following very interesting and instructive extract from one of his letters to General Washington dated September 11, 1789, is quoted:

"And now that I am addressing your Excellency I will avail myself of the occasion to call your attention an object at least equal importance to the dignity of the Nation, and

which her quiet and prosperity is intimately connected. I mean the protection of the seacoast of the United States. This has hitherto been left to the Individual States and has been so totally neglected as to endanger the peace of the Union, for it is certain that an insult offered on this (and there is nothing to prevent it) how ever immaterialy it may be in its local effect, would degrade the nation and do more injury to its political interests than a much greater depredation on her Inland frontier. From these considerations I should argue the necessity of the different Ways and seaports being fortified at the expense of the union, in order that one general and uniform system may prevail throughout, that being as necessary as a uniformity in the discipline of the Troupes to whom they are to be Intrusted.

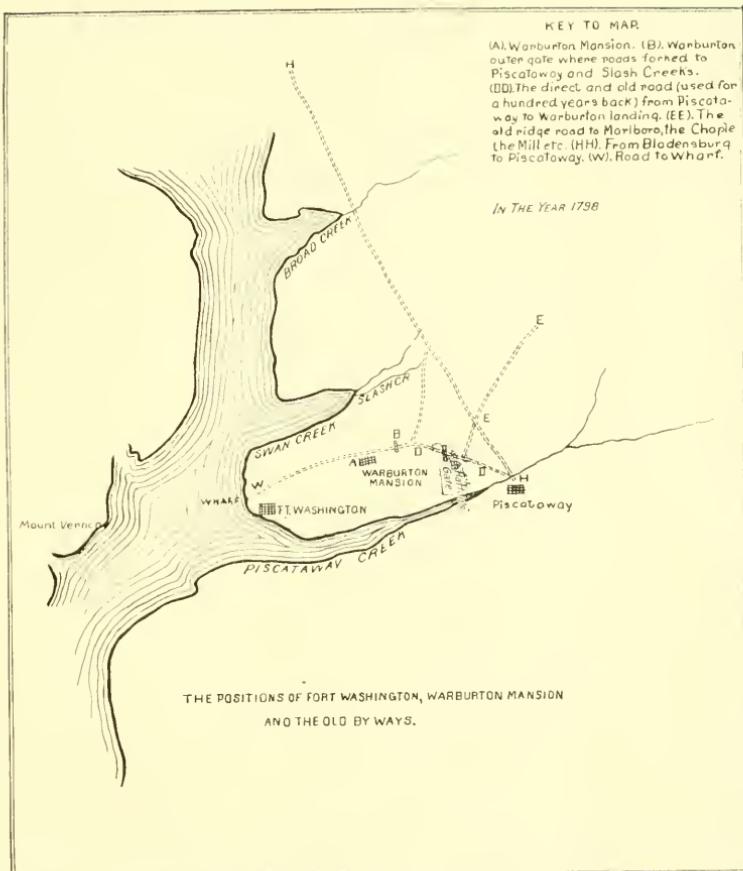
"I flatter myself your Excellency will excuse the freedom with which I impart to you my ideas on this subject, indeed my Confidence in this Business arises in a great measure from a persuasion that the subject has already engaged your attention, having had the honor to belong to the corps of engineers acting under your orders during the late war, and being the only officer of that corps remaining on the Continent." \* \* \*

Gen. Wilkinson in Williams' "Invasion of Washington" at page 285 says:

"Fort Washington was a mere water battery of twelve or fifteen guns bearing upon the channel in the ascent of the river, but useless the moment a vessel had passed. This work was seated at the foot of a steep acclivity, from the summit of which the garrison could have been driven out by musketry; but this height was protected by an octagonal block-house, built of brick and of two stories altitude, which, being calculated against musketry only, could be knocked down by twelve-pounder."

This was its condition in July, 1813.

Still with all these facts before him the Secretary of War, Armstrong, proceeded to argue the utter improb-



WARBURTON MANSION AND THE OLD BY-WAYS IN 1798.



ability of a hostile force leaving its fleet and marching forty miles inland; as to the Potomac, its rocks and shoals and devious channels would prevent any stranger ascending it. "The British," Armstrong concluded, "would never be so mad as to make an attempt on Washington, and it is therefore totally unnecessary to make any preparations for its defense." Not only the Secretary of War, but also President Madison, did not see the need of urgency, and only "a couple of hands" were ordered down to the fort to execute the necessary repairs, so that the ascent of the British in August, 1814, was checked by no formidable display of men or of armament, and their approach to Alexandria was easy and simple, having only one man killed in a journey of eight to nine days or more up the Potomac, and this Briton was shot lower down the Potomac raiding a chicken roost.

After the disgraceful capitulation of Alexandria (and the burning of the public buildings of Washington, by the other wing of the British army, which had landed at Benedict on the Patuxant and come to Washington by way of Marlborough and Bladensburg), Captain Gordon, the British commander, weighed anchor and slowly proceeded down the Potomac. At both the White House and Indian Head on the Potomac (September 5, 1814) there was a considerable muster of men, who fired upon the retreating vessels, towing their prizes taken at Alexandria. Porter's battery at the White House did considerable damage to the enemy, killing seven and wounding thirty-five men. The winding course of the channel of the Potomac and the numerous kettle bottoms\* formed by beds of mud

\* The British passed the kettle bottoms on the ascent of the Potomac August 19 and reached Alexandria August 27. The kettle bottoms of the Potomac River are bars of mud and oysters more frequently found between Lower Cedar Point and Cob Point Lighthouse, a distance of about six miles.

and oysters, made their navigation and speed very slow, and on many occasions the vessels were grounded on one of the frequent sand-bars.

Only a few days elapsed after the departure of the British, when Secretary of State Monroe, who was then also Acting Secretary of War (Gen. Armstrong having resigned in disgrace), ordered (September 8, 1814) Major L'Enfant to proceed to Fort Washington and reconstruct the fort. (Exhibit 5.)

An exhibit dated September 13, 1814, ordering Major L'Enfant to report to Col. Monroe, Acting Secretary of War, is presented, also an exhibit dated Monday, September 19, 1814, showing the amount of material and men sent on that day to Major L'Enfant at Fort Washington.

#### EXHIBIT 5.

WASHINGTON Spt 8 1814

MAJOR L'ENFANT

*Sir*

You will proceed to Fort Washington and examine the state of that work, and report the same as early as possible to

Yr obed sevt

JAS. MONROE

#### EXHIBIT 6.

To MAJOR LONGFOUNG

Topographical Engineer

at or near

Fort Washington

By Express.

Q. M. GENL. OFFICE

WASHINGTON CITY Sept. 13, 1814

7 OClock Evening

MAJOR LONGFAUNG

*Sir*

On receipt of this note you will repair immediately to

Washington City & Report yourself to Colo. Munroe Actg  
Seey of War.

By Order

F MARSTELLER

*Q M Genl.*

EXHIBIT 7.

*On Monday 19th to be Sent to Major L'Enfant at Fort Washington.*

50 Men with 15 or 20 Wheelbarrows, Spade & pick axe &  
a Number of Good Axes.

Carts will be Wanted hereafter.

Timber will Also be Wanted for the Work And Some  
Carpenters & Masons & About 20000 Bricks. Some rough  
Stone & lime, of Which a note will be given by Major  
L'Enfant.

Signed JAS. MONROE

Sept. 15th, 1814.

MAJOR MARSTELLER

Materials Ordered

from 500 to 1000 pereh Stone

from 1 to 200000 Bricks

Timber 40 feet long—14 Inches Square—30 pieces

Seantling 30 do—do—6 by 9— do 400 do

Plank 25 do—do—3 or 4—About 5000 feet

1 Gin Complete with falls.

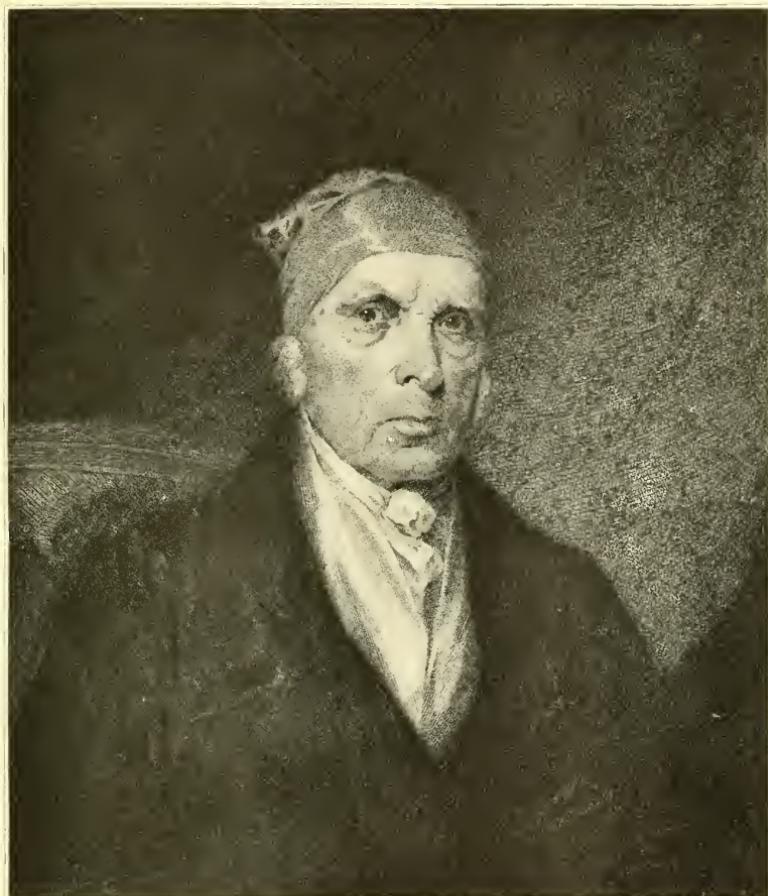
Captain Gordon, H. M. S. *Seahorse*, commanding  
the Potomac squadron, in his report has this to say  
of that part of the journey in the vicinity of Mount  
Vernon and Fort Washington:

“The following morning, August 27, 1814, to our great joy  
the wind became fair, and we made all sail up the river, which  
now assumed a more pleasing aspect. At five o'clock in the  
afternoon, Mount Vernon, the retreat of the illustrious Wash-  
ington, opened to our view, and showed us for the first time,  
sinee we entered the Potomae, a gentleman's residence.

Higher up the river on the opposite side Fort Washington appeared to our anxious eyes, and to our great satisfaction, it was considered assailable. A little before sunset the squadron anchored just out of the gunshot; the bomb vessels at once took up their positions to cover the frigates in the projected attack at daylight next morning and began throwing shells. The garrison, to our great surprise, retreated from the fort; and a short time afterwards, Fort Washington was blown up, which left the capital of America and the populous town of Alexandria open to the squadron, without a loss of a man. It was too late to ascertain whether this catastrophe was occasioned by one of our shells, or whether it had been blown up by the garrison; but the opinion was in favor of the latter. Still we are at a loss to account for such an extraordinary step. The position was good, and its capture would have cost us at least fifty men and more, had it been properly defended; besides an unfavorable wind and many other chances were in their favor, and we could have only destroyed it had we succeeded in the attempt.

"At daylight the ships moored under the battery and completed its destruction. The guns were spiked by the enemy; we otherwise mutilated them, and destroyed the carriages. Fort Washington was a most respectable defense; it mounted two fifty-two pounders, two thirty-two pounders, eight twenty-four pounders; in a martello tower two twelve-pounders, with two loop-holes for musketry; and a battery in the rear mounting two twelve and six six-pound field pieces."

There can be no doubt that had Fort Washington been properly garrisoned and the channel obstructed, as General Winder requested (August 19, 1814), and suitable batteries erected at the proper time on the river, the British squadron would never have reached Alexandria. The officer (Exhibit 8) who had run away with his command from Fort Washington was tried by the court-martial and dismissed from the service.



*James Madison*

At the age of eighty-two.



EXHIBIT 8.

ADT. & INSPR. GENL'S OFFICE  
WASHINGTON Oct. 13, 1814

Sir:

You will attend as a Witness on the part of the prisoner before the Genl. Court Martial sitting in this City for the Trial of Cap. Saml. T. Dyon (?) on thursday the 20th inst.

I am

Sir

Yr. Obt Servt

JN P. BELL (?)

*Maj. Genl.*

MAJOR L'ENFANT

Engineer Fort Washington

A letter dated Fort Washington, July 19, 1815, from L'Enfant to Major Marsteller, reads as follows:

EXHIBIT 9.

FORT WASHINGTON July 19, 1815

Sir

With pleasure I forward to you agreeable to application an expression of my opinion of your character and conduct during your attendance on Fort fort [sic] Washington. I have Sir in all things that have come under my notice found you correct & in conduct the perfect gentleman.

P. CH. L'ENFANT

to MAJOR MARSTELLER, etc.

After the second war with Great Britain, Fort Washington was allowed, as most of the fortifications throughout the United States, to go to rack and ruin for want of proper care to its armament and intrenchments, until in 1850 it was a mere military post, having one or two companies of artillery, and later on only a detachment of the ordnance corps.

## FOURTH PERIOD.

In all periods of North American history, aboriginal, revolutionary and secessional, the ground where Fort Washington stands to-day has taken a prominent part. The first order issued during the Civil War for the protection of Washington to the naval forces was dated January 5, 1861, signed Isaac Toucey, Secretary of the Navy, and addressed to Col. John Harris, Commandant Marine Corps, directing that a force of marines be sent to Fort Washington, down the Potomac, for the protection of public property. Forty men, commanded by Capt. A. S. Taylor, U. S. Marine Corps, were sent in obedience to this order.\*

Historic Fort Washington, which has seen so many vicissitudes and taken part in so many wars, invasions, sieges and insurrections of this country, had a garrison flag raised to the top of a new steel flag pole, on Wednesday, December 12, 1902, with military ceremony, the music playing, troops drawn up in line with presented arms, and a salute being fired from the guns of the fort. The new flag, which is a large one, flies from the top of the pole fully two hundred feet above the river. It is so situated on a high hill that it can be seen for miles. Until this time only a small flag had been used at Fort Washington on the flag pole within the old stone fort. Under the authority of the War Department the large garrison flag has now been raised, signifying Fort Washington is the headquarters for the Potomac forts.

## DISCUSSION.

Mr. M. I. Weller said: While the able paper which has just been read by Dr. Morgan deserves abundant praise, still I cannot allow this occasion to pass without

\* Richard Wainwright, U. S. N.

out entering my protest against the undeserved condemnation of the American army which was intrusted with the defense of the National Capital and which was commanded by that efficient soldier, General William H. Winder, who with the hastily gathered forces made a determined defense against Wellington's veterans fresh from the scenes of victories in the Napoleonic wars under the leadership of General Ross who had enjoyed a reputation second to none; I certainly believe at this late day no historian who will have access to original sources will repeat the slurs that were so prevalent shortly after the disaster and which forced the Secretary of War, General Armstrong, into retirement, the victim of public clamor; the campaign lasted ten days with its culmination at Bladensburg, where the forces engaged were nearly equal in number; the battle was well contested, especially by the District of Columbia contingent, numbering about 1,100 men, under the command of General Walter Smith, and the sailors of Commander Barney's flotilla, who served their guns with admirable precision until their ammunition was exhausted; the statement that the army was panic-stricken so often mentioned is not based on facts, there was no rout, but the retreat was effected in an orderly manner, although some of the guns had to be abandoned; it is said that when the order was given to retreat, the District contingent was reluctant to leave the field and some even shed tears that they should be compelled to retire; of course the defeat left the road to Washington open, and the enemy entered the city, on their mission of destruction, reaching Capitol Hill about eight o'clock P. M.; the main cause of the British victory was the use of Congreve rockets, missiles of war totally unknown on this side of the Atlantic and which had spread consternation in the ranks of the

French veterans at the battle of Leipsic, a year previous; and which had the tendency to demoralize any troops unacquainted with this naval implement of war; the British forces fled precipitately from the city the following night, after indulging in acts of vandalism disgraceful to England and subsequently condemned by the civilized world; the British casualties were over 1,100 in number, more than one fourth of their total army, and in their retreat they abandoned their wounded to the mercy of their American foe, who attended them with such generosity that it enlisted the grateful acknowledgments of General Ross and Admiral Cockburn; this at least is one of the bright redeeming features of this short campaign and in vivid contrast to the unjustifiable deeds perpetrated by their enemies; as a grandson of one of the British invaders (my maternal grandfather was an officer in the 44th foot), I am happy to be able to pay this tribute to American valor and American humanity; doubtless many mistakes were made, errors of judgment prevailed in disregarding the warning that the Capital might be attacked, but the charges of cowardice against the American army will not be successfully maintained by any historian who dispassionately reviews all occurrences leading up to that fatal August 24, 1814, and who has a due regard for American honor.

Miss Elizabeth Johnston said that the massacre of the Susquehannock Indians is referred to as occurring in the neighborhood of Piscataway Creek. The chief of the Piscataways was, as the essayist noted, spoken of as "the emperor."

General B. K. Roberts, commanding the defenses of the Potomac with headquarters at Fort Washington,

said that with the present armament of the fort it would be an easy matter to sweep the Potomac for miles down stream. Owing, he said, to the elevation of Fort Washington, as well as the batteries on the Virginia side, above water level, the force at this point in the event a hostile fleet came up stream, would be able to pour in a raking fire on the decks of the enemy's ship, which constitute the weakest portion of modern war ships.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



APR. 25

0 014 310 244 0

L.W.Z.